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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Tuesday, January 9, 1934.

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Subject: "Chiefly About Rice." Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

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This is the day we usually devote to Questions and Answers. But if you don't mind, I'm going to answer just one question today, and then take you to one of the far-off places of the world -- the Island of Madagascar, which lies off the eastern coast of Africa.

I haven't visited that island myself, but I have a friend in the Department of Agriculture who went to Madagascar a few years ago. Doctor Charles Swingle was the first American botanist to set foot on this strange island in the Indian ocean. His search for plants took him hundreds of miles into the jungle.

But I'm getting ahead of my story. Let's be practical, and answer the question that will lead us to Madagascar. Here's the question: "What is the difference between brown rice and white rice?"

Most any variety of rice is brown before it's polished. When the brown rice is put through a polishing machine, it becomes white polished rice. The brown rice has a higher food value -- it's somewhat richer in minerals and vitamins. Brown rice costs more than white -- because there isn't much demand for it.

Whatever the color, whether it's brown or white, rice is the most used as human food of all the grains, if we consider the population of the entire globe. Rice is a staple food in India, China, Japan, and other Oriental countries, including the Island of Madagascar.

When Doctor Swingle arrived in Madagascar, he found he had missed a boat, heading south, by just fifteen minutes. The natives simply could not understand his disappointment. They assured him that there would be another boat in six weeks, and in the meantime, they told the young scientist, there is plenty of rice for all, so why worry?

The Malagash, as the natives are called, spend a few days a year planting, transplanting, and harvesting rice -- and there's food enough for everybody. If they get tired of white rice, they change to red or blue or brown rice. As many as sixty-four varieties grow in Madagascar. On special occasions, dried grasshoppers and locusts are served with the rice.

Time means nothing to the Malagash -- in the native language there is no word for "time." On market day the natives come in from the country, walking for miles, with baskets of rice or eggs balanced on their heads. Sometimes the baskets contain live chickens or geese. A Malagash gentleman may spend two or three days walking to market, then he will sit contentedly for several days longer, waiting for somebody to buy his chicken or his goose, or his rice. When he has

made a few cents, he buys something smart from the display of cast-off clothing in the market place. The native costume is a shawl, but the people from the country like to add a touch of style in the way of a derby hat. At one place, Doctor Swingle was welcomed by a native who wore a stove-pipe hat, and a long night-shirt over his shawl.

I asked my friend about the food in the Madagascar hotels. Rice, and more rice, was the regular diet. He made daily trips to the village markets to get peanuts, bananas, pineapples, guavas, mangoes, or papayas -- to add variety to the menu.

Doctor Swingle and his French companion, Doctor Humbert of the University of Algiers, finally said goodbye to civilization and journeyed to the southern desert, still in search of their botanical specimens. It was very difficult to get native porters for this dangerous trip into the "brush," as the Malagash call the desert. But the party finally set forth on their twenty-day march, the two scientists traveling in curious chairs, each chair being carried on the shoulders of four strong natives.

They took a great supply of rice on their expedition. Each native porter ate two pounds of it, every day. That's a lot of rice for one man to eat. Doctor Swingle's breakfast was a cup of cocoa, but the natives ate no breakfast. They saved their appetites for mid-afternoon, when it was too hot to travel under the burning sun. Then they would prepare their rice, drinking with it a queer beverage known as "varendrano," or rice water. They made this drink by burning a little of the rice to the sides and bottom of a kettle, then pouring cold water over it, and bringing the mixture to a boil.

At the first meal, Doctor Swingle noticed that his porters were eating their rice from tightly woven little grass baskets, and he was sure that no baskets had been packed. Where did they come from? The question was answered when the natives cleaned up their rice, with fingers and wooden spoons, and placed the straw baskets back on their heads. A versatile straw hat, if you ask me.

In the villages, there was plenty of meat -- cattle, sheep and goats -- a real treat for the native porters. Sometimes it was possible to buy manioc root from the natives along the way. Manioc is a plant from which tapioca is made. According to the Malagash, manioc roots, roasted in the coals, are the finest food in the world.

On the sixteenth day of their desert march, Doctor Swingle saw the first of the plants he had been looking for -- the intisy plant. The bulbous roots were filled with water -- the best water the scientists had had for many a day.

That's all I shall tell you about this interesting expedition into the wilds of Madagascar -- for after all, life is real and life is earnest, and there's a dinner to prepare today.

As Lord Byron said:

"All human history attests
That happiness for man, -- the hungry sinner! --
Since Eve ate apples, much depends on dinner."

Much depends on dinner -- so let's make it a good hearty meal for a cold day in January.

Shall we have rice -- Spanish Rice? It's a very appetizing combination of bacon and vegetables and rice and seasonings. Much more delicious, I have an idea, than any of the rice dishes known to the natives of Madagascar.

Here's how to prepare a dish of Spanish Rice -- in the latest approved style: First, fry half a pound of bacon in a skillet until it is crisp. Then take the bacon out of the fat, and break it into small pieces. In the bacon fat, cook three onions, sliced, and two green peppers, sliced. Cook them for about five minutes. Then add three cups of canned tomatoes, and simmer for about ten minutes.

Now it's time to add the rice -- two cups of cooked rice. Stir it in carefully so you won't break the grains. Add the pieces of crips bacon, salt and pepper to taste, and when the rice is heated through, the dish will be ready to serve.

With the Spanish rice let's have a nice green vegetable -- buttered broccoli, or spinach. Instead of a salad, celery and olives, and for dessert, fruit and chocolate cookies.

Tomorrow: "Keeping Up With the Bureau of Home Economics.

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